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Introduction

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Special Issue on Online Advising and Consultations in Self-Access

Edited by Jo Mynard and Adelia Peña Clavel

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Introduction

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Welcome to this special issue of *SiSAL* journal on the theme of online consultations and advising in self-access. We are delighted to feature papers from Australia, Hong Kong, Japan and Malaysia. The first four papers explore the themes of online consultations and advising sessions in university contexts. The fifth paper documents the author's self-directed learning of French and several other languages as part of our column *Ethnographies of self-access language learning*. We hope you enjoy the issue!

Overview of the Contents

The first paper by **Shawn Andersson** from Ritsumeikan University in Japan and **Maho Nakahashi** Osaka University in Japan, assesses the effects of online consultations on students. The authors drew on questionnaire data from students at a university in Japan about their online consultations in a self-access facility. Students felt that their experiences were positive, and they indicated that they would still prefer to attend online consultations in the future.

The second paper by **Yu Hang Kwan** from the University of Hong Kong describes writing centre consultants' perceptions and experiences of synchronous virtual one-to-one tutoring via web conferencing. The author drew on data from semi-structured interviews and found that all four consultants considered synchronous virtual tutoring a viable alternative to face-to-face tutoring.

The third paper by **Jo Mynard**, **Satoko Kato** and **Scott J. Shelton-Strong** from Kanda University of International Studies in Japan explores the perceptions of online advising from the perspective of learners and learning advisors working in a self-access centre at a university. The authors found that despite some challenges, online advising was conducted effectively and in autonomy-supportive ways.

The fourth paper by **Miriam Sullivan** and **Michael McAuley** examines student satisfaction and uptake of online advising appointments before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic at a university in Western Australia. The authors analysed the number and type of learning adviser appointment bookings over six semesters. They found that student satisfaction remained high for advising in both modes, and in-person appointments were slightly preferred overall.

The fifth paper by **Rachel Suet Kay Chan** from the National University of Malaysia is part of the regular *ethnographies of self-access language learning* column edited by **Rob Werner**. The author presents a diary account of her learning of French and eight other languages through Duolingo. The chronicle of the author's learning journey provides inspiration for other self-directed language learners.

Our Takeaways from the Contributions

Online advising and consultations have become more commonplace in recent years, and we are grateful to our contributors for illuminating and documenting many of the affordances, challenges and considerations. From the four studies, we can see that users (learners and educators) appreciated the convenience and efficiency of online consultations and advising despite some technological challenges. We see how educators have mitigated challenges and adapted their practices in order to support students effectively. In two of the studies (Mynard et al. and Sullivan and McAuley), we see that students still have a preference for in-person consultations and advising sessions. However, in one of the studies (Andersson & Nakahashi), students expressed a preference for continued online support. It is heartening to learn that advisors, tutors, and consultants are able to provide quality support for learners regardless of the mode. The authors also shared recommendations for good practice when conducting online consultations or advising sessions, which included, making use of collaborative tools, providing adequate training for staff in how to facilitate online interactions, reminding students of the 'netiquette' for web-based interactions, and adapting advising strategies intended to provide an autonomy-supportive environment.

The contributions to this issue reflect good practice and show us the impact that advising can have on our students' learning and cases where the methodology for advising in language learning can be applied successfully. We hope that these articles become a source of inspiration

for others as they explore their current practices with a critical view, reflect on our role as advisers and consultants and analyse the evolution of ourselves as professionals in order to take advantage of our past practices in post-pandemic times.

Notes on the Editors

Jo Mynard is a professor in the Faculty of Global Liberal Arts, Director of the Self-Access Learning Center, and Director of the Research Institute for Learner Autonomy Education at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba, Japan. She holds an M.Phil in Applied Linguistics (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland) and an Ed.D. in TEFL (University of Exeter, UK). Her research interests include advising in language learning, the psychology of language learning, and learning beyond the classroom. She will be on sabbatical leave for one year from April 1st 2023, and will be based in Italy.

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